

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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R 081750Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9042

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 3628

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PFOR, PINT, PBOR, ES, HO

SUBJECT: PRESENT STATUS OF HONDURAN-SALVADORAN DISPUTE, AS SEEN
FROM SAN SALVADOR

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 3808 AND PREVIOUS

1. RESOLUTION OF THE LONG STANDING BILATERAL DISPUTE WITH
HONDURAS HAS BEEN RELEGATED TO A BACK BURNER AS OTHER MORE
IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS HAVE CONFRONTED THE GOES DURING THE LAST SIX
WEEKS. THE EMBASSY HAS PREVIOUSLY PREDICTED THAT AS EL SALVADOR
CAME NEARER TO THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN LEADING TO MUNICIPAL AND
LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS IN MARCH 1976, THE POSSIBILITIES THAT THE
GOES WOULD BE ABLE TO MAKE THE NECESSARY COMPROMISES AND
CONCESSIONS FOR A BOUNDARY SETTLEMENT WOULD DIMINISH ACCORDINGLY.
MOST OBSERVERS ARE OF THE OPINION THAT THE COUNTRY HAS ENTERED
THE PRE-CAMPAIGN PHASE, AND THAT PARTISAN POLITICAL ACTIVITY
WILL INTENSIFY FROM HERE ON OUT. WE HAVE ALREADY SEEN THIS
BEGIN TO HAPPEN. THE JULY 30 STUDENT PROTEST MARCH THAT ENDED
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IN THE DEATHS OF AT LEAST SIX PARTICIPANTS GENERATED

SEVERAL WEEKS OF IMPASSIONED ATTEMPTS BY THE OPPOSITION PARTIES AND SECTORS TO PIN ALL BLAME ON THE REGIME, AND EQUALLY STRONG EFFORTS BY THE GOES TO LABEL ITS ENEMIES AS PART OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONSPIRACY. PRESIDENT MOLINA AND MANY MEMBERS OF HIS CABINET SPENT A GREAT PART OF THEIR TIME BETWEEN AUGUST 1 AND AUGUST 21 EXPLAINING THE GOVERNMENT'S VERSION TO A WIDE VARIETY OF AUDIENCES. THIS PREOCCUPATION WITH PRESSING INTERNAL POLITICAL MATTERS OBVIOUSLY TOOK PRECEDENCE OVER OTHER ISSUES. FROM RECENT REPORTING FROM TEGUCIGALPA, IT APPEARS THAT BOTH GOVERNMENTS ARE DEVOTING THE MAJOR SHARE OF THEIR ATTENTION TO DOMESTIC POLITICAL MATTERS. THE BOUNDARY DISPUTE, LONG-STANDING, EXTREMELY COMPLEX AND WITH NO EVIDENT SOLUTION IN SIGHT, HAS BEEN ALLOWED TO DRIFT AWAY FROM THE CENTER STAGE.

2. DESPITE THIS LACK OF ATTENTION AND ADVANCE ON THE GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT LEVEL, A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF DE FACTO PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE. THIS WOULD INCLUDE:

(A) PARTIAL REESTABLISHMENT OF ACROSS THE BORDER TRADE - THE PAST MONTH HAS SEEN CONSIDERABLE NEWS COVERAGE DEVOTED TO CEMENT SOLD BY HONDURAN SUPPLIERS TO SALVADORAN CUSTOMERS AND TRUCKED ACROSS THE BORDER. SALVADOR IS EXPERIENCING A SERIOUS CEMENT SHORTAGE. HONDURAN CEMENT PLANTS HAVE APPARENTLY SIGNED CONTRACTS TO SELL CEMENT AT GOOD PRICES AND ENCOUNTERED NO DIFFICULTIES IN CROSSING THE BORDER TO MAKE DELIVERY. THIS DE FACTO RESTORATION OF TRADE, ADMITTEDLY CONFINED TO A TRADE THAT BOTH SIDES BENEFIT FROM, HAS RECEIVED FAVORABLE COMMENT IN THE SALVADORAN MEDIA, WHICH IN ITSELF IS A MEASURE OF THE GENERALLY RELAXED ATMOSPHERE.

(B) BORDER MEETING CONTINUE - AS THE DAO HAS REPORTED, THE TWO MILITARIES ARE CONTINUING THEIR MEETINGS AT THE FRONTIER. A GOOD INDICATION OF THE RELAXED AND FRIENDLY NATURE OF THIS INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIP IS THAT THE NEXT MEETING MIGHT TAKE PLACE IN SAN SALVADOR, WITH WIVES AND INCREASED SOCIALIZING. NOTWITHSTANDING WHAT THESE MEETINGS DEMONSTRATE ABOUT THE APPARENT DETERMINATION ON BOTH SIDES TO PREVENT THE POSSIBILITY THAT ANY FUTURE BORDER SQUABBLES ESCALATE TO SOMETHING MORE SERIOUS, IT MUST BE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD THAT THESE GET-TOGETHERS ARE NOT DESIGNED TO DEAL WITH THE BASIC BOUNDARY ISSUE.

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(C) MELGAR-MOLINA AGREEMENT - IN THEIR FACE-TO-FACE MEETING LAST JULY 7, THE TWO PRESIDENTS AGREED TO UTILIZE TWO CHANNELS FOR FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS ON THE BOUNDARY ISSUE. THE FIRST, BETWEEN THE RESPECTIVE FOREIGN MINISTERS, WAS TO HAVE BEEN THE PATH OF THE SLOW, CAREFUL PROCESS OF NEGOTIATION. UNFORTUNATELY, THE TWO MINISTERS HAS DISCUSSED THE MATTERS AT THE COSTA RICA SUMMIT ONLY TO CONCLUDE THAT NEITHER SIDE WAS PREPARED TO MAKE MAJOR

CONCESSIONS TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM. BOTH HAVE SINCE TURNED THEIR ATTENTION TO OTHER MORE PRESSING BUSINESS, DEVOTING THEIR ENERGIES TO THOSE MATTERS OF HIGHER PRIORITY. THE SECOND CHANNEL, BETWEEN THE TWO DEFENSE MINISTERS, HAS PRODUCED NOTHING SO FAR IN THE WAY OF PROGRESS ON THE BASIC ISSUES.

3. ANOTHER INDICATION OF THE GENERAL PREVAILING MOOD THAT THE SIX YEAR IMPASSE IS UNLIKELY TO BE RESOLVED WITHOUT A NEW AND DRAMATIC INITIATIVE, IS A SUGGESTION THAT APPEARED IN THE SEPTEMBER 5 ISSUE OF ONE OF THE CAPITAL'S SMALLER CIRCULATION NEWSPAPERS. THIS WAS A REQUEST THAT, IN THE WAKE OF HIS TRIUMPHANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, SECRETARY KISSINGER SHOULD NOW COME TO THIS REGION AND SOLVE THE HONDURAN-SALVADORAN PROBLEM. THE IMPLICATION WAS THAT ONLY A NEGOTIATOR OF THE SECRETARY'S STATURE AND SKILL COULD HOPE TO RESOLVE THE DISPUTE. ALTHOUGH SALVADORAN EDITORIAL WRITERS ARE FAVORABLY DISPOSED TO THE PROPOSITION THAT NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE NEIGHBORS IS OF VIATL IMPORTANCE, WE HAVE SEEN NO INDICATION OF ANY WILLINGNESS TO ADVOCATE MEANINGFUL CONCESSIONS TO ACHIEVE IT.
MOSKOWITZ

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